


# DISCOURSE

Concerning the  
Lawfulness and Right manner of keeping

**CHRISTMAS,**  
And other Christian *Holy-days,*

By way of *Question and Answer.*

Intended for the Use of  CHARITY-SCHOOL.

*Therefore let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven,  
neither with the leaven of Malice and Wickedness;  
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and  
truth. I COR. V. 8.*

*Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that  
they may follow Strong Drink, that continue until  
Night till Wine inflame them. And the Harp  
and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine are  
in their Feasts, but they regard not the work of the  
Lord, neither consider the Operation of his Hands.  
ISAIAH V. 11, 12.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for, and Sold by H. Hills, in Black-fryar, near  
the Water-side. 1708.

*The Lawfulness and Right manner of keeping  
Holy-Days in general, and that of  
Christmas in particular : In a Dialogue  
between the Master and his Scholars.*

*Master.* **Y**OU have been accustomed on this and other *Holy-days*, by the special Command of these your worthy Governours and Benefactors, by whose Bounty and Liberality, you are snatch'd as *Fire-brands* out of the Fire, are here committed to my Care, to be instructed in the Principles of the Christian Religion, as profess'd in the Church of *England*, (which I shall endeavour by the Grace of God to perform to the best of my Power,) and afterwards in fit time are to be put into a Capacity of getting an honest Livelihood, and doing God, your Sovereign and your Country Service, as becomes good Christians, and Loyal Subjects. I would therefore have you give these your worthy Governours and Benefactors an account of your Practice in this Particular, and the Reasons of it. *First* therefore, what do you mean by *Holy-Days*?

*Scholar.* Days set apart for the Publick Worship of God, which are either Festival, or Days of Thanksgiving: Such as the *Nativity*, *Circumcision*, *Resurrection*, *Ascension*, and *Manifestation* of our Blessed Saviour to the Gentiles; The *Annunciation* and *Purification* of the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, his Mother. The *Feasts* of the *Apostles*, to wit the Days of their *Martyrdom*, the Feast of *St. John the Baptist*, *St. Barnabas*, *St. Michael the Arch-Angel*, and of *All-Saints*, on which we bless and praise God for the Good Examples of all Saints and Martyrs,

and

and Confessors, Holy Men and Holy Women, Departed this Life in God's Faith and Fear. Other Holy-Days, are Days of Fasting and Humiliation, such as the Forty-Days of L E N T, which we keep in Commemoration of our Saviour's being led into the Wilderness by the Devil, for Forty Days to be tempted by him, *Ashwednesday*, or the first Day of Lent, so called, because the Primitive Christians were us'd then among other Expressions of Sorrow, to throw *Ashes* on their Heads. *Good-Friday*, so call'd, because we then Commemorate our Saviour's Dying on the Cross, for the Sins of the whole World, who alone deserv'd to be call'd Good. *Rogation Days*, viz. *Monday*, *Tuesday*, and *Wednesday* before *Holy Thursday*, or *Ascension Day*, so called, because in the Primitive Times the Priests, accompanied by the People did (as it is customary now) go about the Fields and beg God's Blessing on the tender Fruits of the Earth. *Vigils*, or the Eves of several great Festival Days, So call'd, because the the Primitive Christians were wont to sit up the best part, if not all those Evenings, and spend them in a due preparation for the succeeding Festival, to wit, in Praying, hearing those Portions of Scriptures read, which relate to the succeeding Day, and in singing of Psalms, and other Divine Hymns. *Ember Days*, so called, either as some think, from a German Word that signifies *Abstinence*, or from the Word *Ember*, which signifies *Ashes*, because the Primitive Christians were wont at these times as well as on *Ashwednesday*, to sprinkle *Ashes* on their Heads, or to sit in them, as was customary in this Kingdom, especially to eat no Bread on these Days, but Cakes made under *Embers*, so that by eating of that they brought to mind that they were but *Ashes*, and so shou'd soon become again, or most probably, as others think, from an old Saxon Word, which signifies a *Circuit*, or a *Course*, because they were not occasional, but returned every Year, and may properly be called *Fasts in Course*. They

are observed at the 4 Seasons of the Year, being the *Wednesday*, *Friday* and *Saturday* after the first *Sunday* in *Lent*, after *Whitsunday*, after the 14th of *September*, and after the 13th of *December*; and since these *Sundays* next after these *Ember Days* are appointed for the Ordination of *Priests* and *Deacons*, we are ordered to joyn in a Prayer then for God's special Guidance and Governance of the *Bishops*, that they may faithfully and wisely make choice of fit Persons to serve in the Sacred Ministry. *Wednesday* is appointed for a Day of Fasting, because our Saviour was on that Day betray'd by *Judas Iscariot*: *Friday*, because then he was Crucified: *Saturday*, because then we represent the Apostles Sorrow for the loss of their Lord lying in the Grave. Lastly, all *Fridays* in the Year, except *Christmas Day*, for the Reason I gave before,

*Mast.* Why I pray was *Christmas Day* excepted from being a Fast.

*Schol.* For the same Reason as the *Lord's Day* was. because the Birth and Resurrection of our Lord; the first of which was chiefly commemorated on this Day, and the latter on the *Lord's Day*, (wich was the Day on which he arose) ought not to be sullied with the least appearance of Grief. There were we are told some in the Primitive times which us'd to fast on the *Lord's Day*, and therefore were branded with the odious Name of *Murderers of our Lord*, *κτενοντοιοι*. But there never were any heard of that fasted on this Day, till about Threescore and eight years ago, when the Parliament, no less in Rebellion against God than their Pious Sovereign, K. *Charles the Martyr*, chang'd this Holy Festival into a Fast, and not only issued out wonderful strict Orders for the Observation of it, but commanded Three Fast Sermons ( 1. ) then preach'd before them to be Printed; in Two of which ( 2. ) the

( 1. ) By Mr. *Thoroughgood* and Mr. *Langeley* before the *Commons*, and Mr. *Calamy* before the *Lords*.

( 2. ) Mr. *Thoroughgood's* and Mr. *Calamy's*.



Preachers ascribe this Change to the *peculiar Providence of God.*

*Maſt.* But is not the Observation of *Holy-Days Superstitious*? ſince in *Deuteronomy* xviii. 10. *An Observer of Times* is declar'd an Abomination to the Lord, and the *Galatians* reproach'd by St. Paul, *Gal.* iv. 10, 11. for observing *Days*, and *Months*, and *Times* and *Years*.

*Schol.* The Days Condemn'd by God in the place of *Deut.* which you mention'd, were ſuch as were Dedicated by the *Heathens* to their falſe Gods, or ſuch as were obſerved by them as lucky or unlucky Days, and what St. Paul blam'd the *Galatians* for, was for obſerving ſuch *Days*, *Months*, *Times* and *Years* of the *Jews*; which tho' abrogated, as being the Types of what had then been compleated, the *Judaizing* Chriſtians attempted to impoſe upon them, as neceſſary to Salvation, contrary to the Apoſtles Endeavours of ſetting them at liberty in the freedom of the Goſpel, and to the Doctrine of *Salvation by Chriſt alone*, which might juſtly make him afraid of them: And further we ought not to imagine, that the obſervation of *Holy-days* is forbid in the Scriptures, ſince God himſelf ordain'd ſeveral Feaſts to be obſerv'd, in Memory of paſt Benefits, as that of the *Pafſover*, of *Pentecoſt* and of *Tabernacles*: Beſides our Saviour kept a Feaſt, which the *Jewiſh Church*, under *Judas Maccabæus*, the ſuppos'd Author of the Book of *Maccabees*, had inſtituted, without any Command from God, to commemorate the *Reſtoration of the Temple-Worſhip* after it had been defiled by *Antiochus*, which was call'd *The Feaſt of the Dedication*, John x. 22. and the common Practice of all Chriſtian Churches and States, in appointing and keeping yearly Days of Publick Thankſgiving, and Humiliation, is Argument ſufficient to prove that in the common Senſe of Chriſtians, 'tis not forbidden in the holy Scriptures.

*Maſt.* Do you ſay that all Chriſtian Churches and States have appointed Anniverſary or Yearly *Holy-days* to be obſerv'd.

Scol. Yes, For tho' some few of late have not, especially the Churches of *Geneva*, of *Scotland*, and of *New England*, yet all besides have; and 'tis very remarkable, that the Christians who live among the Barbarous *Turks*, and are known by the Name of the *Greek Church*, have: And a very Learned Man amongst us, who lived for some time amongst them, and very diligently observ'd all their Customs, both Religious and Civil, has told the World, (1.) *That next to the miraculous and gracious Providence of God, the Preservation of Christianity among them is to be ascrib'd to the strict and religious Observation of the Festivals and Fasts of the Church, for the Children, and those of the most ordinary Capacities, know the meaning of these Holy Solemnities, at which times they flock to Church in great Companys, and thereby retain the Memory of our Blessed Saviour's Birth, Dying upon the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, and keep up their constant Profession of their acknowledgment of the Necessary and Fundamental Points of Faith, and of the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and the like. And while they celebrate the Sufferings and Martyrdoms of the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and other great Saints, who laid down their Lives most joyfully for his Name, and underwent with unwearied and invincible Patience all the Torments and Cruelties of their Heathen Prosecutors, they take Courage from such Glorious Examples, and are the better enabled to endure with less trouble and regret the Miseries and Hardships they daily struggle with. As for the Protestant Churches beyond the Seas, They all observe Feasts and Fasts except that of Geneva, which would gladly restore them as they would have prevented their Abolition, had they been able: For Mr. Calvin, their first Reformer, and all their Divines since, have approv'd of the Observation of them. But as he, and the rest of the Ministers cou'd not then stop the Fury of the People, who either thro' Covetousness, or some other weak Reason then abolish'd them, so cannot their present Ministers, easily get the use of them restor'd, lest*

---

( 1. ) Dr. Smith in his Account of the *Greek Church*.

it shou'd occasion some Disturbances in that tumultuous place. But when they go into *Germany*, or come hither, they never scruple to observe the *Fasts* and *Festivals*, as well as the other Customs of the Church. In *Sweden*, *Denmark* and *Germany*, they observe all the same *Festivals* and *Fasts*, as we do, in some of them, one that we never did keep, viz. *The Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ*. They have Epistles and Gospels appointed to be read on them, and for the most part like ours. The great *Feasts*, viz. those which relate to our Saviour, as his *Nativity*, *Circumcision*, &c. *The Annunciation* and *Purification* of the Blessed Virgin, they keep with as much strictness as they do the *Lord's Day*; In most places they have Three Sermons Preach'd on them, with Hymns sung suitable to the Occasions, and the Shops are shut from Morning till Night. As for the Days of the Saints they are call'd the lesser *Feasts* but they are observed with almost as much Solemnity as the greater ones are here, and there are many large Volumes of Sermons preach'd on these Occasions in Print.

As for the Churches of *Holland* and *Switzerland*, they observe only the greater Feasts, but with very great Solemnity; and there are several Volumes of Sermons which they have preach'd on these days extant in Print. The *French* Protestants, before their Persecution and Banishment, did the like; and those of them which have fled for Shelter and Refuge hither, scruple not for the generality, to follow the Orders of our Church in all other Cases, as well as in this.

*Mast.* You said just now that the Protestant Churches in *Germany*, had Epistles and Gospels as we have. Have they any portions of Scripture out of the *Prophets* and the *Revelations* appointed for Epistles.

*Schol.* Yes, and more too than we, as will appear by comparing ours with theirs.

*Mast.* We have heard that the observation of *Holy-Days*, is not Condemned by the Holy Scriptures, and is fully and clearly justified by the practice of the primitive

( 8 )  
tive and the Protestant Churches beyond the Seas.  
How then must they be observed ?

*Schol.* As we have been inform'd the Primitive Christians did, and the poor Christians who live amongst the *Turks*, and the Protestants beyond the Seas do, *viz.* By a diligent Attendance on the Worship of God in Publick, so far as our Circumstances in the World will permit ; by enlarging our private Devotions at home, for which purpose there have been many good Books publish'd of late, and in doing Works of Charity and Mercy. On the greater Feasts we must meditate on Christ's infinite Condescension ; who, tho' he was the Eternal Son of God, yet vouchsafed for our Sakes to come down from Heaven, and to take on himself not only the form of Man, but of the meanest condition of Men, even of a Servant, and to die not the common Death of Men, but that most ignominious one, of the vilest Malefactors, on the Cross: to endeavour to imitate his great Humility, and Charity: to think lowly of our selves, and as he lov'd us ; so to love one another ; but more especially to establish in our selves those Articles of Faith, which are propos'd as the Objects of our Belief.

On the lesser Festivals: We ought to meditate seriously on the Graces and Virtues the Saints then we commemorate, were eminent for, and to thank God for the Grace he bestow'd on them, and the good Example he enabled them to set us, and to beg his Assistance that we may imitate them as they imitated Christ, and in this we shall be mightily assisted by diligently reading the Lessons, Epistle and Gospel of the Day. But above all, we must take care, that we prophane not these Holy Days especially this of the Nativity of our blessed Saviour, by Intemperance and Excess, by Luxury and Debauchery, and by spending too much, of that precious time, which ought to be spent in the more immediate Service of God ; in playing at Cards, (which the Pious Fathers in the Primitive Church were wont to call the Devil's Books, which several  
very

very  
much  
never  
the C  
are d  
( Can  
M  
estab  
Faith  
lief,  
days,  
Sc  
whic  
learn  
the  
ans a  
the  
Boun  
taug  
us in  
ven  
Feast  
and  
are p  
Lady  
ceive  
all  
the  
who  
us in  
fore  
Pilate

( 1  
Serm  
Dorri  
A Dis  
( 2



very Learned and Pious Men have lately wrote very much against) (1.) which the Churches of *France, Geneva and Holland*, have expressly forbid, (2.) and which the Clergy of the Church of *England* more especially are debarr'd of, by an express Canon of the Church, (*Can. lxxv.*) or any other unnecessary Recreation.

*Maſt.* We heard juſt now that it was our Duty to eſtabliſh in our ſelves on *Holy days* the Articles of Faith, which are propos'd as the Objects of our Belief, I pray how does the yearly Returns of *Holy-days*, put us in mind of theſe Articles of our Faith.

*Schol.* There has been a little Book publiſh'd lately, which is call'd *A farther Inſtruction for thoſe who have learnt the Church Catechiſm, wherein by an Explanation of the Feſtivals and Faſts of the Church of England, Chriſtians are remind'd and fix'd in the Profeſſion of the Articles of the Apoſtles Creed*: which has been preſented to us by the Bounty of our generous Benefactors; in which we are taught that the obſervation of *Holy-days* in general, puts us in mind that *God is the Father Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth*, that the Obſervation of *Sundays*, and the Feaſt of *St. Michael*, remind us that *God made Heaven and Earth*; that by keeping the *firſt day of the Week* holy, we are put in mind that *Jeſus Chriſt is his only Son our Lord*, that *Lady-day* and *Chriſtmas* puts us in mind of his being conceived by the *Holy Ghoſt*, and born of the *Virgin-Mary*, that all Days of *Faſting* and *Humiliation*, more particularly the *Holy Week*, or *Paſſion Week*, ſo call'd, becauſe the whole Hiſtory of our Saviour's Paſſion is then read to us in the Service of the Church, being the Week before *Eaſter*, put us in mind of his ſuffering under *Pontius Pilate*, being Crucified, Dead and Buried. That the Ob-

---

(1.) *V.* The Regulations of Play propos'd, and recommended in a Sermon Preach'd at *Tunbridge Wells*, Auguſt, 19 1706. By *Theophilus Dorrington*, 8vo, p. 10. Biſhop *Beveridge's* Private Thoughts, p. 246. A Diſſuaſive from Gaming, for *J. Downing*.

(2.) *La Discipline des Eglifes Reform. de France*, Chap. 14. Arr. 29.

servation of *Easter-Day, Easter-Monday and Tuesday*, and of all *Sundays* in the year, put us in mind of his *descending into Hell*, and *rising again from the Dead the third day*; That *Ascension-day, or Holy-Thursdai*, which is kept the 40th Day after *Easter*, because our Lord after 40 Days conversing with his Disciples, ascended into Heaven, puts us in mind that he *ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*, that the days of *Advent* put us in mind of his *coming to judge both the Quick and the Dead*. That the Observation of *Whitsunday*, and the *Monday and Tuesday* following, establishes in us the Belief of the *Holy Ghost*, that as he did in a Miraculous manner descend on the Apostles on the day of *Pentecost*, he still continues to perform good Offices for the Church of Christ, that all the *Festivals* of our Lord, the *Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs*; and especially the Observation of *All-Saints Day*, reminds us of the *Holy Catholick Church*, and the *Communion of Saints*. That all times of *Fasting and Abstinence*, do put us in mind of the *Forgiveness of Sins*; That all *Sundays*, and especially *Easter-day*, and the *Monday, Tuesday, and Sunday* following, put us in mind of the *Resurrection of the Body*; and lastly, That the *Rest from our worldly Labour on Holy-days, and more especially on the Lord's Days*, puts us in mind of the *Life Everlasting*, to wit, *that Eternal Rest which is prepared for the People of God*; and the Divine Exercises of *Prayer and Thanksgiving*, have an admirable tendency to fit and prepare our Souls to relish the Joys and Delights of the Blessed above.

*Mast.* Your School-fellows have given a very good Account of the Reasons why they keep *Holy-days*, and after the manner they ought to be kept: I pray let me know why you keep this *Holy-day* in particular, and with greater Solemnity than other *Holy-days*.

*Schol.* We keep this *Holy-day*, to wit, *The Nativity of our Lord, or the Birth-day of Christ, commonly call'd Christmas Day*, in Memory of God's suffering his only begotten Son, our most blessed Lord and Saviour, *Jesus Christ*, to be born of the Virgin *Mary*. *Mast.*

*Maſt.* Why do you call this Day the *Nativity* of our Lord? when you are not ſure that our Saviour was born on this day, and when 'tis more probable that he was born at another Season of the year.

*Schol.* We do not believe that our Saviour was born on this day, ſo as to make it an Article of our Creed, and neceſſary to be believ'd in order to Salvation.

*Maſt.* How! do you not believe ſo? when you pray thus in the Collect for the Day, and the Sunday after; *Almighty God who haſt given us thine only begotten Son to take our Nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin,* mark the Words as at this Time.

*Schol.* This is I have heard the chief Objection which our Diſſenting Brethren make againſt joyning with us in the obſervation of the Day. They run away with a falſe meaning of the Words. Thoſe who have explain'd this Place ſay, no more is meant by it, than *giving thanks to God for giving us his only begotten Son to take our Nature upon him, and to be born of a pure Virgin; which we thankfully Commemorate at this time.* But nevertheleſs, tho' we are not infallibly certain that he was born on this Day; yet we have much more reaſon to believe that he was, than that he was not.

*Maſt.* Why do you think ſo?

*Schol.* Becauſe all Chriſtian Churches [unleſs we except the Greek Church in the Primitive Times, which ſome ſay for a little while kept it Twelve Days after, to wit on the *Epiphany*] have and do keep it on this Day; and even the ſeveral Learned Men that think he was not born at this time, have never thought it reaſonable to change the Day, much leſs to aboliſh the Obſervation of it [except it were thoſe who were in actual Rebellion about Threſcore years ago here, againſt their Sovereign K. Charles the Martyr; and perhaps ſome few of our Diſſenting Brethren now.] But nevertheleſs thoſe Learned Men are not agreed unanimouſly on what day he was born, for tho' the generality of them think

( 12 )  
think he was born on the 25th of *September*, or thereabouts. A Learned Man has lately ( 1. ) attempted to prove, that he was born the latter end of *October*, and others the latter end of *March* ( 2. )

*Maſt.* But how do you answer the Objections drawn from the Shepherds being in the Fields, when the Angels deliver'd the glad tidings of our Saviour's Birth to them, and from *Augustus's* commanding every one to go up to their City to be tax'd. Do you think that so mild an Emperor as *Augustus* is represented to have been, would have commanded so hard a thing as this: Or, can you believe that 'tis likely that Shepherds were abroad in the Fields with their Flocks, on *Decemb. 25.*

*Schol.* These are not, if well consider'd, such Difficulties as they at first appear to be. As to *Augustus's* Command, considering the mildness of the Country, according to the Account of Geographers and Travelers, who tell us, that it is as warm there generally in *December*, as it is here in *May*, it cannot be supposed to be a hard Command; but be that as it will, great Princes must not be disobey'd: And that this Taxation or taking down the Names of all above a certain Age, throughout the whole *Roman* Empire, was made at this time, we are told was made apparent above 1400 years ( 3. ) ago, from the very Rolls or Registers then to be seen at *Rome*, to which the Fathers in the Primitive Church ( 4. ) appeal'd, for the certainty of Christ's Birth, when the *Heathens* seem'd unwilling to believe it. And as to the Shepherds being in the Fields, watching over their Sheep, which some think so highly improbable, it will appear not so strange and unlikely, when 'tis consider'd, 1<sup>st</sup>. That the Land of *Judea*,

---

( 1. ) *Whiston's* short view of the Chronology of the Old Testament, and of the Harmony of the 4 Evangelists. p. 158.

( 2. ) *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Strom. lib. D. Alix. de vero Anno mensis & die Natali Jesu Christi.*

( 3. ) *V. Chrysostom. Homil. in Nativitat. ad Pop. Antioch.*

( 4. ) *Justin Martyr Apol. 2. Tertullian. contra Marcion. lib. 14. cap. 19, &c.*



in which these Shepherds were feeding their Flocks, in so hot a Country, that their Harvest is ripe always at the latter end of *March*, for they were commanded by God Almighty, *Leviticus xxiii. v. 10. Deuteron. xvi. 9, 10. to offer up to the Lord a Sheaf of the First-fruits of their Harvest, on the 2d day after the Passover, which was the 16th day of the Month, Abib or Nisan, which is with us, the 27th day of March;* so that it is not unlikely but it might be warm enough for the Shepherds and Sheep to be abroad in the Fields at this time; and 2dly, That tho' it might somerimes, nay generally be too cold for them to lie abroad in the Fields then all Night; yet it might happen, that in the year when our Saviour was Born, it might be a very mild Winter, and warm enough for them to be abroad; for sometimes it happenseven here, where our Harvest is generally 4 Months later than the *Jews*, that it is warm enough for Shepherds and their Sheep to be abroad all Night at this time of the year; and it has been said, That where many Sheep are kept, they do so even at this time, when the Weather is favourable. And 3dly, it has been prov'd from the *Roman* Authors, who have wrote about Tillage, Sheep, and other Country Affairs, that in *Italy*, which is not near so warm as the Land of *Judea*, tho' the Precepts of Husbandry were, That in the Winter their Sheep should be kept in Cotes, rather than in Fields, yet they had their Winter Feedings abroad also. (1.) So that these Objections are not of such great Weight as at first sight they are imagin'd to be.

*Mast.* 'Tis said in the Scriptures, That Christ was Baptiz'd by *S. John*, when he began to be about 30 years of Age: Which imports that it was the same time of the year as he was Born. Do you think it probable that he was Baptiz'd, that is dipp'd, as it is generally agreed he was by the *Baptist* at this cold Season of the year, when 'tis likely 'twould have kill'd him.

---

( 1. ) Θεοδωπρωτος Or God made Man a Traſt, proving the Nativity of our Saviour to be on the 25th of December, by *John Selden*, 8vo, 1661.

*Schol.* To this several Answers may be made, 1<sup>st</sup>. The Words, *he began to be about 30 years of Age*, do not prove that he was full 30, but near it, as several Learned Men are of Opinion, (2.) so that it does not directly follow, That he was Baptiz'd in *December*, tho' it must be confess'd, that some Christians, particularly those call'd *Abyssines*, in *Africa*, in the Dominions of the Emperor of *Morocco*, do dip themselves in Lakes or Ponds, on the Feast of the *Epiphany*, or *Twelfth-day*, every year, in Commemoration of Christ's being Baptized on that day.—But tho' it be granted, that he was Baptized about the time of the year he was Born at, it does not from thence follow, that it was improbable he should be Baptiz'd in *December*, or thereabouts; there is no ground in the World to think, he would have receiv'd hurt much less been kill'd by being dipp'd then: Nay tho' the Season had been as cold as it generally is here. For it has lately been prov'd by the many Cures wrought by cold Bathing, that it is not so dangerous, as has been imagin'd: Many People, and those of the best Quality, do now practice cold Bathing, and not only on the account of some dangerous Distempers, but for Pleasure, or to remove a Tenderness, and harden themselves against the effects of Cold; and not only in the Summer, but all the Winter. The *Jews* here, and in *Holland*, and in *Germany*, when any People come over to them, as some have of late, tho' but seldom, dip them thrice in the coldest Springs they can meet with in the midst of Winter, as the Anabaptists generally do here; and yet it has never, at least very seldom been heard, that any receiv'd hurt hereby; much less can it be conceiv'd, that our Saviour shou'd at 30 years of Age, and in so warm a Country as the Land of *Judea*. But not to mention the Practice of the *Muscovites*, who dip their Children usually at 8 days old;

---

( 2. ) *Edward Fisher's* Feast of Feasts, and *Christian Cavent*, to the old and new *Sabbatarians* Sect, 6 &c.

and even in the Rivers; it is well known that it was customary so to do here, from the Foundation of Christianity, till about Fourscore years ago. In the Common-Prayer-book in K. Edward the VIth's time, the Minister was order'd by the Office of Baptism, *to dip the Child that was brought to be Baptized, three times; First on the Right side, Secondly on the left side, and the Third time the Face towards the Font;* when all the Fonts were large enough to dip Children of 2 or 3 years old in, and even now Children are to be dipp'd when they are baptiz'd, provided the Godfathers and Godmothers do certifye the Minister *that the Child is able to bear it.*

*Maſt.* Why do you call this day *Chriſtmas-day*? You do not go to Maſs on this day I hope.

*Schol.* No, it is not call'd ſo, becauſe the Papists go to Maſs on this day; for this day was not only call'd by this Name, but all *Holy-days* were call'd *Maſs-days*; and the Word *Maſs* was us'd ſometimes for the *Publick Service*, ſometimes for the *Lord's Supper*, in this Kingdom long before the Popiſh Doctrin of *Transubſtantiation*, or that the Bread and Wine in the *Lord's Supper*, are after their Conſecration by the Prieſt, chang'd into the real Body and Blood of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is now ſeated, and making Interceſſion for us at the Right Hand of his Father, God bleſſed for evermore. I ſay, the Word *Maſs*, was us'd to ſignifie the *Lord's Supper*, long before this wicked Doctrin was heard of, as appears from the Book of *Martyrs* (1.) and the Word *Maſs* is ſtill us'd in the ſame innocent Senſe among the Proteſtants of *Denmark, Sweden, and Germany*, ſo that it ſignifies the day ſet apart on purpoſe to offer up our Praises and Thankſgivings at the *Lord's Table*, for God's inſtimable kindneſs in ſending his Son our moſt bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt into the World: tho' others (2.) think the Word *Maſs* comes from a

(1.) Vol. 2, Fol. 448. l. 30. Fol. 451. l. 60. Fol. 452. l. 20. 60.

(2.) v. Bp. Andrews Sermons. Warmſtry's Vindication of Chriſtmas Festival. p. 16.

( 16 )  
Latin Word that signifies *Sending*, so that it signifies the Day on which we Commemorate Christ's being sent into the World.

*Maſt.* But why need any Day or particular Season be ſet apart for this more than another, ſeeing we Commemorate *Chriſt's* being ſent into the World, every *Lord's Day*.

*Schol.* 'Tis true we do ſo, and the *Jews* alſo did Commemorate their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and all other bleſſings which they receiv'd from heaven on the Sabbath-day ; yet it pleas'd God to command 'em to commemorate his deſtroying of the *Egyptians*, on the Feaſt of the *Paſſover* ; his giving them the law on Mount *Sinai*, on the Feaſt of *Pentecoſt*, and of their dwelling in Tabernacles in the Wilderneſs for 40 years, on the Feaſt of *Tabernacles*. Beſides, they obſerved other Feaſts without his Command, as the Feaſts of *Purim* or *Lots*, in Commemoration of their Deliverance from *Haman's* wicked Deſigns, as we read in the Book of *Eſther*, of the Feaſt of *Dedication*, in Commemoration of the reſtoration of their Service, and publick Worſhip at the Temple of *Jeruſalem*, by *Judas Maccabeus*, after it had been polluted for many years ; which Feaſt we are told our Saviour honour'd with his Preſence, *John* x. 22. and it nowhere appears, that either God Almighty, or our bleſſed Saviour, condemn'd this Practice of the *Jews*, much leſs can we imagine that we ſhould diſpleaſe him by commemorating at this time an infinitely greater Benefit, than any of thoſe which the *Jews*, even God himſelf, thought deſerv'd to be kept in remembrance by Annual Feſtivals. But beſides, tho' we do, at leaſt ought to have in remembrance the Benefit of Chriſt's Incarnation, every Lord's Day ; yet it is not ſo likely to be remembred then with that due Seriousneſs as it ought, when we neither hear thoſe Portions of Holy Scripture read or explain'd, which more immediately treat of it, as we do on this Day ; for the *Pſalms* which are appointed to be read in the Church in the Morning



ing are the 19th, the 45th, and 85th; in the first of which we are told, that *the Heavens declare the Glory of God*, which brings to our remembrance how a *Star* appear'd at our Saviour's Birth, and guided the Wise-men of the East to *Bethlehem*, the place of his Nativity: the 45th is a Birth-Song of Christ, *The fairest of the Children of Men*, and of his mighty Success in subduing the Devil, and the World. The 85th is acknowledg'd by all to be set for the Birth of Christ; and for that Reason, has always been selected and appointed to be used on this Day; and we are told (1.) that the *Jews* themselves believ'd the 11th Verse of this Psalm to relate to the *Messias*: For tho' it is a Thanksgiving to God for sending a Saviour, which should save his People from their Sins, the greatest Captivity that is, and therefore cannot properly be meant of any but of Christ, who was therefore call'd *Jesus*, and the Royal Psalmist speaks of this Deliverance as past, saying, v. 1. *Thou hast been favourable unto thy Land, Thou hast turn'd away the Captivity of Jacob, &c.* Yet David being a Prophet, and seeing this before, might be supposed here, as he is by St. Peter on another Account, to have spoke of our Saviour's Nativity, as if it were already past. The Psalms for the Evening are, the 89th, 110th, and 132d, the first and last of which, are thankful Commemorations of God's merciful Promise of sending Christ into the World, *that Seed of David which he had sworn to establish, and to set up his Throne for ever*, and the 10th expressly mentions the Birth of Christ: The 1st Verse of which is apply'd by our Saviour to himself, *Matt. 22. 44. Mark 12. 36. Luke xx. 42.* and also by St. Peter, *Acts 11. 34.* and St. Paul, *1 Cor. 15. and 25. Heb. 1. 13.* and the 4th Verse by St. Paul, *Heb. v. 6. vii. 17. 21.* The first Lessons are Prophecys of his Birth, and in the 2d, and the Epistle and Gospel, we find the Accomplishment of them, and in

the Collect we are taught to pray, *that we may be partakers of his Birth*, and at Church the Ministers do from their Pulpits more at large explain to us how Christ was God and Man, which the *Arrians* and *Socinians* deny, how he was the true *Messias*, and that the Prophecies relating to the *Messias*, were exactly fulfilled by him, against the unbelieving *Jews*, as also the Necessity, the End and manner of his coming in the *Flesh*, and from thence exhort us to answer the end of his coming, that as he was born in *Bethlehem*, which signifies the *House of Bread*, we should believe him to be the true *Bread of Life*, which came down from *Heaven*. *Joh. vi. 33, 35.* and be at all Seasons ready to feed on it in the Holy Sacrament, where it is Commemoratively exhibited to us, that as he was laid in a Manger at his Birth, appear'd not as an Earthly Prince, but the Son of a Carpenter, and as is suppos'd, work'd at his Father's Trade, till he began to Preach, and even then had no House of his own to put his Head in, but was for the most part maintain'd by Charity and Contribution, we shou'd be reconcil'd to a state of Poverty, that if Poor, we should bear our Condition with Patience and Contentedness, and if Rich not to undervalue and condemn those that are Poor, but as far as we are able to feed the Hungry, give drink to the Thirsty, Cloath the Naked, and to take in the Strangers, and to visit those that are sick and in Prison; since our Saviour did by his Being miraculously discover'd to the Shepherds, as well as to the Wise Men intend to teach us that Poor and Rich, Simple and Wise, Jew and Gentile, are all alike his Disciples, and has promis'd to accept at the last Day, any Kindness done to the meanest and poorest of his Disciples, whom he accounts his Brethren, as done unto himself; and lastly, that as he came into the World, to destroy the Works of the Devil, 1 John iii. 8. and to purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. Tit. xi. 14. Tit. 11, 12. We should deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and live  
Soberly

*Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World,* Rom. xiv. 6. that we should regard to the Lord every Day, and more especially this Day, and this holy season, in which we commemorate the unspeakable Benefit of our Saviour's appearance in the Flesh, to put away all sin, and not to spend it as too many have done, and perhaps do, in Rioting and Drunkenness, or in Chambering or Wantonness; Rom. xiii. 13, and 14. nor to make provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. This is the usual Doctrine of the Sermons preach'd on this day, as may be seen in those which are Printed. (1.)

*Maſt.* But since the Observation of this Day, is not enjoyned, or once mention'd in Holy Scripture; and it does not appear that our Saviour's Apostles, or those that liv'd near them, did observe this Holy-day, and it has since prov'd and does prove every year an occasion of great Sin, why should it be kept any longer: Is it not fit that the Day should be abolish'd, and People prohibited to make such Feasting as they do at this time of the Year?

*Schol.* This is some of the Reasoning of our Dissenting Brethren; and time was when it so far prevail'd here, viz. about Threescore Years ago, that it was quite abolish'd. In the Year 1644. A Fast was appointed by the Parliament then in Rebellion, no less against God than their Sovereign K. Charles the Martyr, to be observ'd on this Day, and Three of the Sermons Preach'd before them on that day, are in Print, (2.) in Two of which the Authors (3.) ascribe this Change of the Day into a Fast, to the peculiar Providence and

---

( 1. ) Bishop Andrews's 17 Sermons, Arch-Bishop Usser's *Immanuel*, Rich. Gardiner, 1638. T. Bradley, 1650. Bishop of Sarum, 1689, and 1696. Dr. Sharp Arch-bish. of York, 1691, and 1704. Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet, late Lord Bish. of Worcester, 1693. Dr. Talbot, Bish. of Oxford, 1702. Dr. Blackall Bish. of Exeter, 1704. Gale's Sermons. Arch-bish. Tillotson's Ser. 8. Vol. 2. Ser. 1. xvi. and Vol. 13. Ser. x. Mr. Wharton's Ser. Bish. Lake's Sermons. Bishop Beveridge's Sermons, Vol. 3. Sermon. 2.

( 2. ) Mr. Thoroughgood, and Mr. Langley before the Commons, and Mr. Calamy before the Lords. ( 3. ) Mr. Thoroughgood, and Mr. Calamy.



Direction of God, and for several years after strict Orders were issued out, that the Shops should be opened, and the Churches kept shut, and that no sort of Food that was usually in season at this time, as minc'd Pies, Plumb-porridge, &c. should be eat on this day. (1.) It has been deliver'd in Print (2.) that the Ministers of those Times did usually teach their People that it was *unlawful to administer the Sacraments on any other Day than the Lord's-day, and in any other place than the Church, to ring the Bells in Peale on the Lord's-day, to eat Minc'd-pies, Plumb-porridge, or Brawn in December; to trim the Church or private Houses with Holly and Ivy about Christmas, or to stick a Roasting Piece of Beef, or a Collar of Brawn, when it is brought to the Table with Rosemary, to play at Cards or Bowls, to Hawk or Hunt, to give Money to a Servant or Apprentice's Box, or to send a couple of Capons, or any other Present, to a Friend in the Twelve days: To use a Ring in the Solemnization of Marriage: To cover a Herse with a White Sheet, and a Thousand such like Conceits*: Yet it was accounted gross Superstition, and Will-worship, to go to Church and bless God for the Benefits of our Saviour's Nativity, Circumcision, Ascension, &c. or for the good Examples of his Apostles; but none so much as this day: They were not content to follow their Trades and Callings, and keep from Church on this day themselves, but were zealous to make others do so too: For which end a Lord-Mayor of London, sent \* *Dorchester*, in Dorsetshire, for the Keys of several of the Churches on that day, and in another place of this Kingdom, \* a certain Colonel rode about the Town backwards and forwards, and by soft and hard Words induc'd the People to open their Shops on this day, and being invited to dinner that day, where there was Plumb-porridge, and Minc'd-Pies, thought he was invited in order to be Affronted.

(1.) See Bishop Blackall's Sermon on Christmas Day, 1704.

(2.) Edward Fisher's Answer to 16 Quæries, touching the Rise and Observation of Christmas, Answ. 12.



We are told in Print, that on the 25th of *February*, 1643. it was deliver'd from the Pulpit of *St. Michael's Cornhill-Church* in *London*, to this Effect, *That a Feast celebrated to the Honour of Christ, is no better than that Feast which the Israelites made unto the Molten Calf; (1.) and that Mr. Edmund Calamy, a famous Preacher of those times, when this day fell on a Sunday, lest he should be thought to regard the Festival of our Saviour's Nativity, Preach'd on Matt. xxvii. 46. Eli, Eli, lamasabachthani, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.* Nay, not content with thus vilifying this Holy Festival, by indulging themselves in all kind of servile Labours on the day they disgrac'd it, by playing at Foot-ball, and following other disorderly Recreations, and all this was done to prevent Superstition and Prophaneness, by which they say the Day had been abus'd: But God be thank'd both these Extreams are now happily avoided. The Day cannot now be pretended as it was then, Superstitiously to be preferr'd before the Lord's Day; nor so much prophan'd by Intemperance, and unlawful Gaming, as 'tis to be fear'd it was then: But while *the Harp and the Viol, the Tabret. and Pipe are in their Feasts,* we omit not to regard *the Work of the Lord, and to consider the Operation of his Hands.* We religiously frequent the Church; and very rarely omit to commemorate and return thanks at the Lord's Table, for God's unspeakable Mercy of sending his only begotten Son into the World, for the Redemption of Mankind, and of extending our Charity in a very plentiful manner to our poor distressed Brethren, and so great is the Charity of those of the Episcopal Perswasion in *Scotland*, on this occasion, tho' under a state of Persecution, that as it has been reported, on this day last year, there was no less than One Hundred pounds Collected at the Holy

( 1. ) *Edward Fisher's Feast of Feasts, &c.* and *Christian Caveat to old and new Sabbatarians*, Sect. 8.

( 2. ) *A just defence of the Royal Martyr K. Charles, I, &c.* 8vo, 1699. P. 174.

Communion in one Meeting-House; and even our Dissenting Brethren's prejudices, are, God be thank'd, so far remov'd, that very few, if any scruple to imitate us in the Civil Observation of this Festival, by using greater Hospitality, and by extending their Charity to their poor Brethren, more liberally now than at other times: But some of them imitate us in the Religious Observation of it, for which end their Teachers in some places (1.) preach to 'em on the Subject of our Saviour's Incarnation; and what ever others do, a great part of 'em that tho' we are not certain of the precise time of our Saviour's Birth, yet it is fit to be specially commemorated at some time or other, and at none so fitly as on the 25th of *December*, which has been observ'd for that end by the unanimous consent as it were, of the whole Christian Church, which is the express Doctrine of Two very Learned Protestants beyond the Seas. (2.)

2dly, It is true that this Festival ever has been, and ever will be abus'd by wicked Men, it ever has, and ever will, notwithstanding the utmost care be an occasion of much Sin; but notwithstanding this, it has been the constant sense not only of the Christian Church since, but before the Reformation, and even in the Primitive times, that the day should not be abolish'd, because it was abus'd by some, but still observed, and care taken to prevent its being made an occasion of *Gluttony*, *Intemperance* and *Sensuality*: For what end the Fathers in the Primitive Church, were wont to caution their Auditors in their Sermons on this day, many of which are extant in Print, against the prophanation of it, by Intemperance, and too great Imitation of the Customs of the Heathens, among and near whom they liv'd. One of them in a particular spoke thus, (3.) *Let us Celebrate this Feast, not in a Panegyric, but Divine, not in a*

(1.) At *Lincoln*, and *Steeleford* in *Lincolnshire*, at *Shrewsbury* in *Shropshire*, at Mr. *Shower's* Meeting-House *London*, at *Stanas*, *Middlesex*.

(2.) *Hospinianus de Festis*. *Spanhemii dubia Evangelica*.

(3.) *Gregory Nazianzen* in *Nativitat. Christi*.

( 23 )

worldly but supersecular manner, not regarding so much our selves or ours, as the Worship of Christ, &c. And how shall we effect this? not by crowning our Doors with Garlands, nor by leading of Dances, nor adorning our Streets; not by feeding our Eyes, not by delighting our Ears with Songs, nor by effeminating our Smell with Perfumes, not with humouring our Taste with Dainties, not with pleasing our Touch, not with Silken and costly Cloathes, &c. not with the sparkling of Jewels, not with the Lustre of Gold, not with the artifice of counterfeit Colours, &c. Let us leave these things to Pagans for their Pumps, &c. But we who adore the Word of the Father, if we think fit to affect Delicacies, let us feed our selves with the Dainties of the Law of God, and with those Discourses especially, which are fitting in this present Festival. And so great was the Devotion of those Pious People, that they frequented the Church then in vast Numbers, and thought it an unspeakable Unhappiness, to be depriv'd of bearing a part in the publick Devotions thereof. Among the many Proofs thereof, which might be brought, it will be proper to mention Two, We are told ( 1. ) *That under the Tyranny of Dioclesian and Maximin, Two Roman Emperers, no less than Twenty thousand Christians, which were met to celebrate this Feast, in the large Church of Nicomedia, were by their Order burnt together with that stately Fabrick to Ashes.* And we are told by another ancient Writer ( 2. ) *That the Roman Emperor Theodosius, having lain for 8 Months under the severe Censure of S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, for permitting one of his Governours to murder Seven thousand People in cold Blood, when the time of this holy Festival drew near, made great moan to his Courtiers, that he was by that resolute Bishop hindred from partaking with the Assembly in that holy Service, and made very importunate Intreaties for his Re-admission.*

But there is a greater Authority on which we may ground the Observation of Festivals, that are liable to be abus'd, and even have been abus'd, and that is of God himself; who did not in the least command the Festivals which he had instituted amongst the Jews, when they were abus'd, and perhaps much more than any of ours, and even than this day's in particular, denounc'd a Woe, only against such as abus'd 'em, as we read in *Isaiah V. 11, and 12 Verses. Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong Drink, that continue until Night, till Wine inflame them, And the Harp, and the Viol, the Tabret, and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts: But they regard not the Work of the Lord, neither consider the Operation of his Hands.* It is to be fear'd, there are too too many such among us, who make the holy Festivals of our Church, and this more especially, Days of Intemperance, and Sensuality. But such Persons will be so at all other times, whenever they are discharg'd from Business, or plenty of Meat and Drink is set before them, or perhaps have Money in their Pockets to purchase 'em.

( 1. ) Nicephori. *Histor. lib. 7. c. 6.*

( 2. ) Theodoreti *Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. 5. cap. xvii.*

And



And to prevent Intemperance in such, no other method can be made use of, but to confine them either to hard Labour like Slaves, or to Cells like Mad People, and to set before them no more Meat and Drink than is necessary to supply the wants of Nature, God forbid, that the Observation of Festivals, set apart to commemorate the Mysteries of our Redemption by our most blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the holy Lives and exemplary Deaths of his blessed Apostles and Martyrs who Seal'd his holy Gospel, and planted our most excellent Religion with their Blood, God forbid, I say, that Days and Times set apart for this good end, shou'd be abolish'd, because they are abus'd by Wicked and Sensual persons; I for my part, ( and I hope the rest of my Schoolfellows are of the same mind,) am resolv'd, with the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, to observe these holy Festivals, which our most excellent Church has set apart, for the best of ends, and this the greatest of all in particular; not in *Riot and Drunkenness*, not in *Chambering and Wantonness*, not in mispending that precious time which God has given me, in Gaming, and other idle Diversions, but in attending the Service of the Church, with due Seriousness, and in spending the best part of it while I am at home, in reading the holy Scriptures that are appointed by our Church to be read then, and in meditating on 'em, and reading other good useful Books, which shall either be given or lent me for this purpose.

*Maſt.* I pray God you may, and all your other Schoolfellows, and all that have heard this Exercise, and all else that have any regard for God's Honour and Glory; and may the holy Spirit of God continue to strengthen us to every good Work. To whom with God the Father, and God the Son, *be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.* 4. 00 58  
*Schollars.* Amen.



hod  
hard  
and  
s ne-  
bid,  
me-  
most  
holy  
Apo-  
and  
with  
imes  
ause  
l for  
s are  
ce of  
vals,  
r the  
alar;  
*Wan-*  
God  
fions,  
n due  
hile I  
t are  
me-  
ooks,  
pose.  
other  
rcise,  
r and  
ue to  
with  
and

157

(1)

(2)